Common Core Social Studies Learning Plan Template

**Lesson Title:** Why did America Drop the Atomic Bomb?

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**Appropriate for Grade Level(s):** 8th grade

**History Standard(s)/Applicable CCSS(s) (RI, W, S&L, L):**

H4.[6-8].7 Identify the causes of World War II and the reasons for U.S. entry into the war

H4.[6-8].8 Discuss the effects of World War II on American economic and political parties

CCSS.ELA-Literacy. RH.6-8.1 Cite specific textual evidence to support analysis of primary and secondary sources

CCSS.ELA-Literacy.SL.8.1A Come to discussion prepared, having read or researched material under study; explicitly draw on that preparation by referring to evidence on the topic, text, or issue to probe and reflect on ideas under discussion

CCSS.ELA-Speaking and Listening. SL.8.1 Engage effectively in a range of collaborative discussions (one-on-one, in groups, and teacher-led) with diverse partners on grade 8 topics, texts, and issues

**Type of Lesson:** Jigsaw Discussion Strategy

**Student Readings (list):** All student readings were taken from Stanford History Education Group Reading Like a Historian Atomic Bomb lesson.

**Total Time Needed:** 1- 90 minute class period

**Lesson Outline:**

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| **Time Frame**  **(e.g. 15 minutes)** | **What is the teacher doing?** | **What are students doing?** |
| 5 minutes | Pass out the student reading entitled: Statement by the President Announcing the Use of the A-Bomb at Hiroshima (August 6, 1945). Before students begin reading, have them brainstorm the ways atomic bomb affected WWII and post-WWII. | Students will brainstorm with a partner the ways the atomic bomb affected WWII and post-WWII. |
| 20 minutes | Monitor student progress. | Students are silently reading the article and annotating the text to help them grasp the most important idea from the text: Place a square around it then make a list of words/phrases from the text that describes it. They are also circling the words they do not understand. |
| 15 minutes | Teacher will define any words students need. Then, teacher will reread the article out loud. | Students are following along as teacher reads. Students will then share their learning from the annotation exercise. |
| 10 minutes | Assign each student a number and based on the number they are given they will read one of the student readings (Document A, Document B, Document C, Document D). | Students are reading their assigned article and becoming experts. When they are done reading, they will begin to complete the seminar handout. |
| 10 minutes | Get students into their “Expert Groups”: All number 1’s will get together, all number 2’s, etc. | Students are discussing the answers on the seminar handout. |
| 15 minutes | Get students into seminar groups so each reading is represented in the group. Teacher will monitor student progress. | Students will share each of their summaries. Then as a group go through each seminar question. Students should pull in evidence from their reading when possible. |
| 5 minutes | Teacher will explain the directions for the powerful paragraph. | Students will write their paragraph for homework. |

**Description of Lesson Assessment:** The Jigsaw Seminar Questions will serve as an informal assessment of the readings. The powerful paragraph will serve as the formal assessment for this lesson. Students will be writing their claim, evidence and reasoning in a paragraph that answers the question: Why did America drop the atomic bomb?

Statement by the President Announcing the Use of the A-Bomb at Hiroshima (August 6, 1945)

Harry S. Truman

Sixteen hours ago an American airplane dropped one bomb on Hiroshima, an important Japanese Army base. That bomb had more power than 20,000 tons of T.N.T. It had more than two thousand times the blast power of the British "Grand Slam" which is the largest bomb ever yet used in the history of warfare.   
  
The Japanese began the war from the air at Pearl Harbor. They have been repaid many fold. And the end is not yet. With this bomb we have now added a new and revolutionary increase in destruction to supplement the growing power of our armed forces. In their present form these bombs are now in production and even more powerful forms are in development.   
  
It is an atomic bomb. It is a harnessing of the basic power of the universe. The force from which the sun draws its power has been loosed against those who brought war to the Far East.   
  
Before 1939, it was the accepted belief of scientists that it was theoretically possible to release atomic energy. But no one knew any practical method of doing it. By 1942, however, we knew that the Germans were working feverishly to find a way to add atomic energy to the other engines of war with which they hoped to enslave the world. But they failed. We may be grateful to Providence that the Germans got the V-1's and V-2's late and in limited quantities and even more grateful that they did not get the atomic bomb at all.   
  
The battle of the laboratories held fateful risks for us as well as the battles of the air, land and sea, and we have now won the battle of the laboratories as we have won the other battles.   
  
Beginning in 1940, before Pearl Harbor, scientific knowledge useful in war was pooled between the United States and Great Britain, and many priceless helps to our victories have come from that arrangement. Under that general policy the research on the atomic bomb was begun. With American and British scientists working together we entered the race of discovery against the Germans.   
  
The United States had available the large number of scientists of distinction in the many needed areas of knowledge. It had the tremendous industrial and financial resources necessary for the project and they could be devoted to it without undue impairment of other vital war work. In the United States the laboratory work and the production plants, on which a substantial start had already been made, would be out of reach of enemy bombing, while at that time Britain was exposed to constant air attack and was still threatened with the possibility of invasion. For these reasons Prime Minister Churchill and President Roosevelt agreed that it was wise to carry on the project here. We now have two great plants and many lesser works devoted to the production of atomic power. Employment during peak construction numbered 125,000 and over 65,000 individuals are even now engaged in operating the plants. Many have worked there for two and a half years. Few know what they have been producing. They see great quantities of material going in and they see nothing coming out of these plants, for the physical size of the explosive charge is exceedingly small. We have spent two billion dollars on the greatest scientific gamble in history-and won.   
  
But the greatest marvel is not the size of the enterprise, its secrecy, nor its cost, but the achievement of scientific brains in putting together infinitely complex pieces of knowledge held by many men in different fields of science into a workable plan. And hardly less marvelous has been the capacity of industry to design, and of labor to operate, the machines and methods to do things never done before so that the brain child of many minds came forth in physical shape and performed as it was supposed to do. Both science and industry worked under the direction of the United States Army, which achieved a unique success in managing so diverse a problem in the advancement of knowledge in an amazingly short time. It is doubtful if such another combination could be got together in the world. What has been done is the greatest achievement of organized science in history. It was done under high pressure and without failure.   
  
We are now prepared to obliterate more rapidly and completely every productive enterprise the Japanese have above ground in any city. We shall destroy their docks, their factories, and their communications. Let there be no mistake; we shall completely destroy Japan's power to make war.   
  
It was to spare the Japanese people from utter destruction that the ultimatum of July 26 was issued at Potsdam. Their leaders promptly rejected that ultimatum. If they do not now accept our terms they may expect a rain of ruin from the air, the like of which has never been seen on this earth. Behind this air attack will follow sea and land forces in such numbers and power as they have not yet seen and with the fighting skill of which they are already well aware.   
  
The Secretary of War, who has kept in personal touch with all phases of the project, will immediately make public a statement giving further details.   
  
His statement will give facts concerning the sites at Oak Ridge near Knoxville, Tennessee, and at Richland near Pasco, Washington, and an installation near Santa Fe, New Mexico. Although the workers at the sites have been making materials to be used in producing the greatest destructive force in history they have not themselves been in danger beyond that of many other occupations, for the utmost care has been taken of their safety.   
  
The fact that we can release atomic energy ushers in a new era in man's understanding of nature's forces. Atomic energy may in the future supplement the power that now comes from coal, oil, and falling water, but at present it cannot be produced on a basis to compete with them commercially. Before that comes there must be a long period of intensive research.   
  
It has never been the habit of the scientists of this country or the policy of this Government to withhold from the world scientific knowledge. Normally, therefore, everything about the work with atomic energy would be made public.   
  
But under present circumstances it is not intended to divulge the technical processes of production or all the military applications, pending further examination of possible methods of protecting us and the rest of the world from the danger of sudden destruction.   
  
I shall recommend that the Congress of the United States consider promptly the establishment of an appropriate commission to control the production and use of atomic power within the United States. I shall give further consideration and make further recommendations to the Congress as to how atomic power can become a powerful and forceful influence towards the maintenance of world peace.

**Document A: Textbook**

Even before the bomb was tested, American officials began to debate how to use it. Admiral William Leahy, Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, opposed using the bomb because it killed civilians indiscriminately. He believed that an economic blockade and conventional bombing would convince Japan to surrender.

Secretary of War Henry Stimson wanted to warn the Japanese about the bomb while at the same time telling them that they could keep the emperor if they surrendered. Secretary of State James Byrnes, however, wanted to drop the bomb without any warning to shock Japan into surrendering.

President Truman later wrote that he “regarded the bomb as a military weapon and never had any doubts that it should be used.” His advisers had warned him to expect massive casualties if the United States invaded Japan. Truman believed it was his duty as president to use every weapon available to save American lives.

*Source: American History Textbook, American Vision, pg. 615.*

**Document B: Thank God for the Atomic Bomb**

My division, like most of the ones transferred from Europe was going to take part in the invasion at Honshu (as island of Japan). The people who preferred invasion to A-bombing seemed to have no intention of proceeding to the Japanese front themselves. I have already noted what a few more days would mean to the luckless troops and sailors on the spot… On Okinawa, only a few weeks before Hiroshima, 123,000 Japanese and Americans killed each other. War is immoral. War is cruel.

*Source: Paul Fussell, a World War II Soldier, Thank God for the Atom Bomb, 1990.*

**Document C: Stopping Russia**

“[Byrnes] was concerned about Russia’s postwar behavior. Russian troops had moved into Hungary and Romania, and Byrnes thought it would be very difficult to persuade Russian to withdraw her troops from these countries, that Russia might be more manageable if impressed by American military might, and that a demonstration of the bomb might impress Russia.”

*Source: James Byrnes was one of Truman’s advisors on the atomic bomb. In addition to defeating Japan, he wanted to keep the Soviet Union from expanding its influence in Asia and to limit its influence in Europe. Manhattan Project scientist Leo Szilard met with Byrnes on May 28, 1945. Leo Szilard wrote about his meeting with Byrnes in 1980.*

**Document D: Survivor**

One of my classmates, I think his name is Fujimoto, he muttered something and pointed outside the window, saying, “A B-29 is coming.” He pointed outside with his finger. So I began to get up from my chair and asked him, “Where is it?” Looking in the direction that he was pointing towards, I got up on my feet, but was not yet in an upright position when it happened. All I can remember was a pale lightening flash for two or three seconds. Then, I collapsed. I don’t know how much time passed before I came to. It was awful, awful. The smoke was coming in from somewhere about the debris. Sandy dust was flying around…

I crawled over the debris, trying to find someone who was still alive. Then, I found one of my classmates lying alive. I held him up in my arms. It is hard to tell, his skull was cracked open, his flesh was dangling out from his head. He had only one eye left, and it was looking right at me… he told me to go away.

I, so, was running, hands were trying to grab my ankles; they were asking me to take them along. I was only a child then. And I was horrified at so many hands trying to grab me. I was in pain, too. So all I could do was to get rid of them, it’s terrible to say, but I kicked their hands away. I still feel bad about that. I went to Miyuki Bridge to get some water. At the river bank, I saw so many people collapsed there… I was small, so I pushed on the river along the small steps. The water was dead people. I had to push the bodies aside to drink the muddy water. We didn’t know anything about radioactivity that time. I stood up in the water and so many bodies were floating away along the stream.

*Source: Yoshitaka Kawamoto was thirteen years old. He was in the classroom at Zakoba-cho, 0.8 kilometers away from the hypocenter. He is now working as the director of the Hiroshima Peace Memorial Museum, telling visitors from all over the world what the atomic bomb did to the people Hiroshima.*

**Jigsaw Seminar Questions**

**Expert Groups:**

1. What is the tone of the document? Use evidence to support your answer.
2. How does the author feel about the dropping of the atomic bomb? Use evidence to support your answer.
3. Based on the document, why does the author think the atomic bomb was dropped? Use evidence to support your answer.

**Seminar Groups:**

**Answer the following questions using evidence from the documents.**

1. How did the dropping of the atomic bomb affect World War II and post-WWII?
2. What reasons show support of dropping the atomic bomb?
3. What reasons show disapproval of dropping the atomic bomb?

**Powerful Paragraph Guidelines**

In a powerful paragraph, answer the question: Why did America drop the atomic bomb? Your paragraph must include a claim, evidence, and reasoning. Use the scoring checklist below to guide your writing.

**Proficient Emerging Missing Paragraph**

\_\_\_\_\_ \_\_\_\_\_ \_\_\_\_\_ Claim

\_\_\_\_\_ \_\_\_\_\_ \_\_\_\_\_ Evidence and Citations

\_\_\_\_\_ \_\_\_\_\_ \_\_\_\_\_ Reasoning

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